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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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NEAR EAST/AFRICA DIVISION

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INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

For Week Ending
11 January 1950

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NEAR EAST/AFRICA INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

GREECE

New cabinet under fire: Greek politicians and the press are largely critical of the ostensibly non-political "service" cabinet headed by John Theotokis, and some criticism has been reflected upon King Paul himself because of apparent political implications of the choice of Theotokis to end the one-day emergency created by the demise of Populist-Liberal coalition government. Political leaders are particularly resentful because the new cabinet was appointed and Parliament dissolved at the very moment that Parliament was to reach a decision as to modifications in the proportional electoral system employed in 1946, a system that would perpetuate an overabundance of splinter parties. The fear now is that Theotokis may go to the other extreme and impose a majority system for the forthcoming elections. Under this system a Papagos slate might walk away with the mandate at the expense of the established political parties because of the military hero's enormous popularity. Populist (Tsaldaris), Liberal (Venizelos), and Social Democratic (Papandreou) leaders have already threatened to boycott elections under such conditions, and all groups to the left of center are likely to be very sharp in their criticism because the majority system would give them no hope of even token representation in Parliament.

The Theotokis Government is likely to come in for more criticism on the timing of elections (originally planned for March or April) inasmuch as the newly advanced date of 19 February hardly gives time for the full relaxation of martial law and the completion of the electoral registers--both necessary steps before representative elections can be held. The elections may consequently be postponed beyond the 45-day limit imposed by the Constitution on the existence of a "service" cabinet after the dissolution of Parliament.

Once embarked upon such an irregular course, Theotokis might fall under the persuasion--if he is not already under the influence--of Spyros Markezinis, ambitious young political friend of King Paul and Commander in Chief Papagos, with his well-publicized scheme to have Papagos made premier with extraordinary powers. Although Theotokis recently deserted the Tsaldaris Populists and now disclaims further political ambition, he and a number of members of his cabinet are

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confirmed rightists, and his son is a close political associate of Markezinis. The possible existence of a secret understanding between Theotokis and a King Paul-Papagos-Markezinis combination might make new cabinet maneuvers before the announcement of election results a real threat to the established political parties.

TURKEY

Electoral reform: The incumbent People's Republican Party's recent decision to back the principle of judicial certification of election results represents a major concession to the opposition. Such a reform, now almost certain to be adopted in some form by the National Assembly, gives promise that in the balloting this year opposition party candidates will receive at least somewhat better treatment than in the 1946 elections, when there were widespread apparent irregularities on the part of the officials handling the returns. Moreover, although PRP approval for the new procedure came only after Premier Gunaltay had made it a "must" issue, indicating that he would resign if it were not accepted, the opposition Democratic Party, which has steadily pounded away in favor of electoral reform, can now take credit for forcing the government party's hand.

There is, of course, a catch to all this. While Gunaltay, who was probably acting on instructions from President Inonu, is probably prepared to go through with the reform, there are numerous PRP diehards who want to hold on to their control of the election machinery. The Democrats have already charged that a judiciary bill now before the National Assembly provides the means for intimidating judges, by making it easier for the Minister of Justice to "exile" them to remote provinces if they fail to see that the PRP candidates win. Nevertheless, the opposition may congratulate itself on its greatest gain since the inauguration of the multi-party system barely four years ago.

SYRIA

Volatile situation: The Syrian political situation remains potentially explosive. Although a nominally civilian government was formed after the latest coup, the reins of authority are apparently in the hands of the Shishakli army clique, perpetrators of the coup. The Populist Party, which gained a plurality in the pre-coup November elections

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for the Constituent Assembly and which hoped to dominate the new government, is actually of little consequence in the cabinet. Although the Populists hold five of the nine portfolios, no outstanding Populist is included in the government, and the two most important portfolios, National Defense and Interior, are held by independents, tools of the Shishakli group. The Populists evidently feel the sting of their defeat and are reportedly attempting to win over those army elements opposed to the Shishakli venture. Moreover, there are indications that Iraq is supporting the factions in the Syrian Army which oppose the Shishakli group and favor Iraqi-Syrian union. To counteract these moves and to strengthen his own position, Shishakli has in turn sought support from Egypt. The army will thus continue to be the determining factor in the political situation either through the influence of a particular group like the Shishakli clique or through the instrumentality of other army factions which, in their opposition to Shishakli, may join forces to overthrow the existing regime and possibly to promote union with Iraq.

SOMALILAND

Transfer problems: Italy faces serious difficulties with Ethiopia in connection with the transfer of the administration of Italian Somaliland from the UK to Italy which is expected to take place when the UN Trusteeship Council completes the trusteeship agreement now being drafted. The Ethiopian Government has refused to accept the UN decision regarding Italian Somaliland and may submit the case to the International Court for an opinion on the competence of Italy, which is not a UN member, to conclude an agreement with the Trusteeship Council. The Ethiopians also resent the appointment of General Guglielmo Nasi as Administrator of Italian Somaliland because he fought against Ethiopia in the Italo-Ethiopian war, was Governor of Harar Province during the Italian occupation, and formerly was high up on Ethiopia's list of war criminals. Relations between Italy and Ethiopia will be further complicated by an unsettled frontier problem. The Somali inhabitants of the Ethiopian frontier province of Ogaden refuse to recognize the sovereignty of Ethiopia and have been administered since the war by the British. If Italy attempts to enter and administer the Ethiopian Ogaden in accord with a UK request, Ethiopia will almost certainly resist with force. Even if Italy does not occupy the Ogaden, the province will become a fertile area for intrigue and unrest. Ethiopian and Italian interests also conflict in Eritrea, the disposition of which will not be settled until the UN meets in September. The present uncertainty regarding the disposition of Eritrea will give Ethiopia an additional reason to exert

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itself to undermine Italy's position in Somaliland because of Ethiopia's great fear of Italian encirclement.

The informal talks between Ethiopian and Italian representatives which were held during the last UN session and which are expected to be continued in Geneva are unlikely to dissipate the basic differences between the two countries--differences which have embittered their relations ever since Italy first carved out an African Empire in the middle of the 19th century.

IRAN

Tudeh activity accelerating: Tudeh activity, which began to revive in the fall of 1949, has flared up in the past two weeks. Despite police threats of imprisonment on the barren islands of the Persian Gulf for persons engaged in the party's clandestine activities and even arrest of ten to twelve suspects daily, Tudeh newspapers have been distributed in both Tehran and the provinces in large numbers and party slogans have been scrawled across the walls of the main streets in Tehran. The recent return as First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy of D. S. Kommissarov, who was Press Attache during the Tudeh Party's heyday and was allegedly involved in the organization of the Azerbaijan Democrat Party, has raised Iranian suspicions that he may be directing the party's revival, and the Iranian Government has reportedly requested his recall.

Of particular concern to the government is the fact that Tudeh propaganda currently has a greater appeal among certain elements of the population, particularly labor groups and youths, than in the past. This receptive attitude may be laid largely to the general economic decline which the government has been unable to forestall in Iran during the past year. Since Iran's economic circumstances are expected to worsen by spring, thus offering more fertile ground for Communist agitation, strenuous illicit efforts by the Tudeh Party will undoubtedly continue, despite the government's repressive measures.

NOTED IN BRIEF

Despite the reduction in the number of Turkish divisions (from 22 to 16) which is currently being effected, budgetary difficulties are likely to keep these units well under T/O strength. Quick expansion during a

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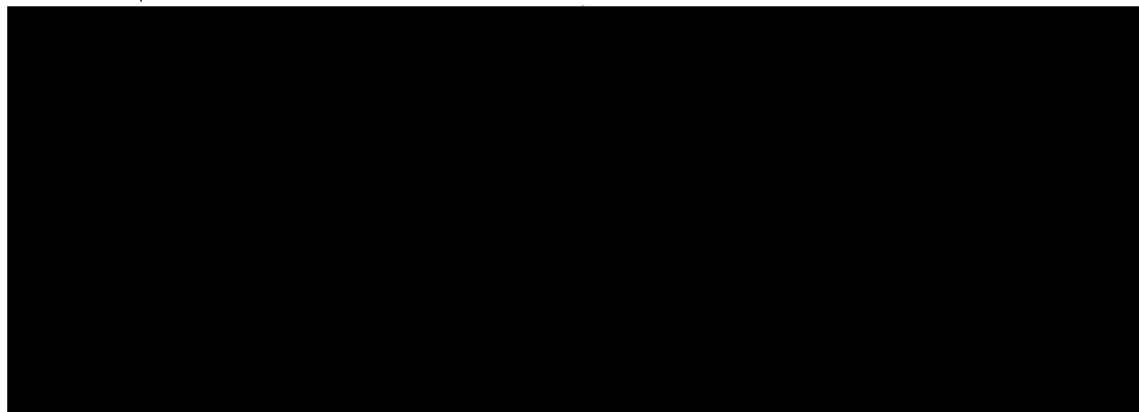
national emergency, under general mobilization orders, would be very difficult.

* * *

Speculation upon possible devaluation of the Turkish lira has apparently not proved too tempting to US cigarette manufacturers. Instead of waiting to see what might happen to the lira, US tobacco-buying organizations have started early and heavy buying from the 1949 Aegean district tobacco crop.

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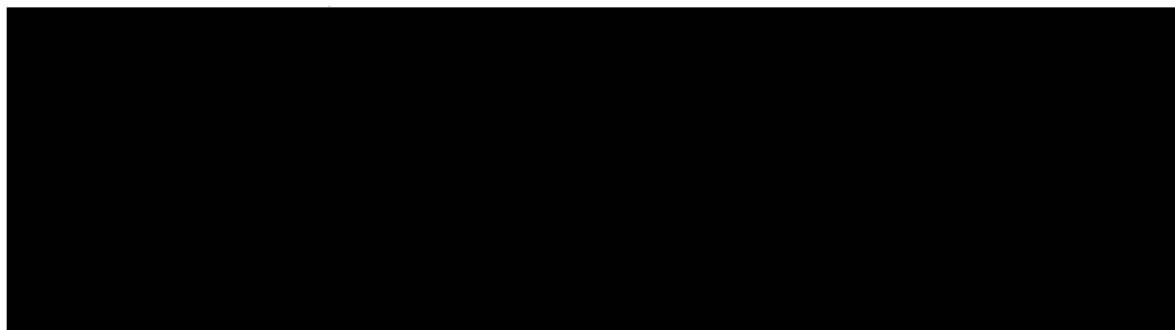


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King Abdullah's five-day visit to his nephew, the Regent of Iraq, stirred conjecture that significant consultations might have taken place regarding the policy to be adopted toward Syrian political developments. There have been no reports, however, that any important decisions were reached on this point. Statements to the press have emphasized the social character of the visit.

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The Shah has been busy since his return from the US. Greatly impressed by US military and economic power and evidently more determined than ever to bring about social and economic reform in Iran, he has called for a campaign against corruption, which he recognizes is hampering progress, and is apparently planning a government shakeup; his real hope is to obtain a prime minister strong enough to carry out the stringent measures which will be required. Additional evidence that the Shah wants speedy action is provided by reports that the Majlis is to be convened within a week, even before new elections to select deputies from Tehran are held.

The continuation of tension between Afghanistan and Pakistan has been emphasized by the latter's ambassador to Kabul, who recently told his US colleague that he intended to recommend that his government sever diplomatic relations with the Afghans. In this case, the ambassador's remark was probably little more than an attempt to stimulate US concern--and (if possible) further US cautionary advice to the Afghans; Pakistan would unquestionably be reluctant to intensify its quarrel with Afghanistan when its relations with India are so precarious. Nevertheless, Pakistan is becoming increasingly impatient with the continuing open sponsorship by Afghan officials and businessmen of the "Pushtoonistan" movement and with the persistence of violently anti-Pakistan articles in the Afghan press. Further evidence of Pakistan's displeasure with the Kabul Government can thus be expected.

The trend toward greater financial stability in the Union of South Africa has now reached the point where some relaxation of the government's rigorous import control program is being undertaken. On 3 January the government announced that, for the first half of 1950, it would issue soft currency permits providing a 50 percent increase over the comparable period of 1949 in value of imports. In view of the probable inability of the soft currency area to fulfill South Africa's needs, a limited number of these permits may be converted to half their value in dollar permits.

Southern Rhodesia and the UK have signed an agreement by which the use of Rhodesian facilities is made an integral part of the RAF peacetime training program. The colony is to make available any land required for airfields, construct more housing for military personnel,

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and make a financial contribution of about \$700,000. The colony also has amended its Defense Act to extend compulsory training to Asiatics and other non-Europeans. Although native black men are still excluded, this policy contrasts with that of the Union of South Africa, which restricts military training to those of European stock.

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